

Volleyball stars share leadership, athleticism

BY RUSTY BRYAN
Stars and Stripes

Judging from its choices, the panel of coaches that selected the 2000 All-Europe high school volleyball team was looking for some leadership to go with all that athleticism.

The first team has its imposing hitters and blockers — Lakenheath's Lindzi Wasko, K-town's Nicole Keller, Baumholder's Katie Feterl, Bitburg's Crystal Bessler, Ramstein's Ashley Schalz and Alconbury's Gemma Breedlove, who left her "Gemma marks" on the hides of opponents who attempted to block her — and its skilled and determined setters and diggers, such as Lakenheath's Dee Smith and Ansbach's Stephanie Kliebert.

But running consistently through the impressive statistical data and game performances cited by the nominating coaches for the team was the leadership role each player brought to her game. At its highest levels, apparently, volleyball is a game of the head and heart as much as it is about digging and spiking.

It's no surprise, of course, that the six seniors chosen by a panel of coaches from all the nominated players should add some leadership skills to the physical ability they brought to the court. On this team, however, even the underclassmen — four juniors and two sophomores — were cited for the direction they helped provide their teams.

Take, for example, Mannheim junior Brett Maley, "a leader by nature" who "places her teammates in a position to succeed," according to Lady Bison coach Heide Weber. Maley was credited with 97 service points in 160 serves and 61 kills in 38 games, but Weber saw value far beyond those numbers.

Also serving as an anchor was "absolutely solid" Bitburg senior captain Brittany Sanders, who averaged eight kills and two digs per match while serving at a 92 percent clip. Sanders used her head, too.

"Her outstanding court sense helped the rest of the team play up to its potential," said assistant John Hall of the Division II runner-up Lady Barons.

In the case of Ansbach, potential turned into an improvement from fifth place to first in the Division III-South standings. At the center of that rise, according to Lady Cougars coach Gary McCauley, was the direction provided by Kliebert.

Kliebert, an 88 percent server who had 66 aces, "did a wonderful job of leading by example and effort," McCauley said of his

team's captain.

There was no improvement in Ramstein's fortunes last season, and that's just fine with Bruce Steffensmeier, coach of the three-time European Division I champion. The Lady Royals, behind All-Europe first-team seniors Schalz and Bebe Duchamp, the only repeat choice from the 1999 All-Europe team, saw their winning streak reach 50 in the European Division I championship match.

The champions looked to both girls for leadership, Steffensmeier said.

Schalz "is in her third year as a three-sport Royal athlete," he wrote of his aggressive and athletic dominator of the net. "She has endured only three losses in all sports combined so far, an indication of her physical ability and leadership skills."

If Schalz was Ramstein's hammer, Duchamp was the artisan who used it perfectly to help her team fashion a three-year record of 54-2, Steffensmeier said.

"The most complete player who has ever worn a Royals uniform," Duchamp, a two-time European Division I MVP, "was an active coach on the floor," Steffensmeier said.

Her coach says Duchamp's setting skills were "unparalleled," but he might get an argument from Lakenheath coach Janis Ready, who had junior Smith touching and delivering the ball during every offensive play all season in the Lancers' 5-1 set.

An 89 percent server, Smith averaged 12 assists per game covering the backcourt like varnish.



Shalz



Duchamp



Feterl



Breedlove

All-Europe volleyball		
First team		
Player	School	Class
Stefania Battestelli	Marymount	Senior
Crystal Bessler	Bitburg	Junior
Gemma Breedlove	Alconbury	Junior
Bebe Duchamp	Ramstein	Senior
Katie Feterl	Baumholder	Sophomore
Nicole Keller	Kaiserslautern	Sophomore
Stephanie Kliebert	Ansbach	Senior
Brett Maley	Mannheim	Junior
Brittany Sanders	Bitburg	Senior
Ashley Schalz	Ramstein	Senior
Dee Smith	Lakenheath	Junior
Lindzi Wasko	Lakenheath	Senior
Second team		
Player	School	Class
Cristina Battistelli	Marymount	Senior
Francesca Battistelli	Marymount	Senior
Lila Crosier	Heidelberg	Senior
Melissa Fust	Aviano	Sophomore
Kelsey Hudson	Rota	Junior
Kristen Hudson	Alconbury	Junior
Kerri Ihde	Ramstein	Freshman
Sara Kernan	Brussels	Senior
Jackie Lincoln	Vilseck	Junior
Nicole Medlock	London Central	Junior
Joanna Miller	Patch	Junior
Alicia Preskey	Wuerzburg	Senior



Wasko



Kliebert



Smith

"Very rarely did she call for help. She managed to cover the floor however she needed to and made the job look easy," Ready said.

Bitburg junior Crystal Bessler, an 88 percent server, can also throw her hat into the setting championship stakes.

According to assistant coach Hall, Bessler, whose "court coverage was phenomenal," provided some 70 percent of all the Bitburg sets in addition to averaging four kills per game.

Like Duchamp and Mannheim's Maley, who will attend two Nike summer camps after departing Europe this summer, Bessler, Hall says, "has tremen-

dous potential beyond high school."

That kind of assessment would have to apply, too, to Baumholder's redoubtable sophomore Feterl, the MVP of the Division III-South and European Division III tournaments, and Alconbury's powerful Breedlove.

According to Alconbury coach Nancy Peck, Breedlove benefited astonishingly from a summer



Maley

Selection panel

Karen Snyder, Mannheim, chair
Gary McCauley, Ansbach
Dick McWilliams, Bitburg
Kori Pollock, Vilseck
Bruce Steffensmeier, Ramstein

weight program and was given the responsibility of roaming the backcourt on defense to defuse the serves and spikes of the opposition.

"A complete player who will only get better," according to Peck, Breedlove amassed 55 kills, 55 aces, 41 assists, 52 digs and 10 blocks in 12 matches.

Kaiserslautern's Keller, has a glorious past — 46 kills and a 91 percent service average in 14 games at the Division I tournament — but an even better future, according to Lady Raiders coach Stan Kyle.

Already "our best defensive player," Keller, Kyle said, "has the potential to be the best player we have ever had at Kaiserslautern High School."

Good things came in threes for European Division III champion Marymount International of Rome. One of the Royals' senior triplets, Stefania Battistelli, made the All-Europe first team; her sisters Cristina and Francesca were voted to the second team.

MVP of the American Schools in Italy tournament, where she registered 25 spikes and 24 aces, Stefania separated herself from her sisters with the head game, the leadership she brought to her team.

"She has been an excellent role model for the younger volleyball players," said her coach, Jason Broadbear.

Like her counterpart in Italy, Lakenheath's Wasko also put up some good numbers, serving successfully 92 percent of the time over the season and perfectly in six of her matches. She also averaged five digs or saves and three blocks per match, but it was her guidance as a co-captain that set her apart, Lancers coach Ready said.

"If there was confusion on the court, Lindzi knew each position and could help get everyone in the right place," Ready said. "We all want to have the super players with the spectacular hits, blocks and plays, but at the end of the day it is the all-around player like Lindzi with the skill, game knowledge and leadership qualities who is the keystone of championship-level teams."

Heads and hearts, in other words, to guide all those athletic arms and legs.

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